United Nations A/62/PV.20

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

20th plenary meeting
Monday, 8 October 2007, 11.37 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Outlule ..... (Botswana)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Outlule (Botswana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

Agenda item 109 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/62/1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Secretary-General presented his first annual report (A/62/1) to the General Assembly at the 4th plenary meeting, on 25 September 2007.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): The delegation of Pakistan would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his first annual report (A/62/1) on the work of the Organization. We expressed our position on the substantive issues covered in the report during the general debate. Today, I wish to focus on the role of the United Nations itself in current international relations.

We are living in an increasingly globalized and interdependent world — a world confronted with complex challenges as well as opportunities for war and peace, poverty and prosperity, coercion and cooperation, and terrorism and tolerance. The world — both States and peoples — can respond effectively to those challenges and grasp the opportunities only if they work collectively and cooperatively within the sole universal Organization, namely, the United Nations. The world Organization has the mandate, the membership and the mechanisms to promote the cooperative multilateralism that is so indispensable for peace, prosperity and survival at the dawn of the twenty-first century. However, it is quite evident that the United Nations has thus far been unable to effectively address the challenges or to exploit the opportunities. The full potential of the Organization remains to be fulfilled.

To realize that potential, Member States must reconcile their conflicting visions of the purpose and functions of the United Nations. The Organization is not an instrument to serve the unilateral objectives and interests of any Power. It is also not a mechanism to operate an oligarchic order of multipolar power relations. The United Nations, as envisaged in the Charter, is a venue and vehicle for the promotion of multilateral cooperation as a means to promote peace, security and better standards of life in larger freedoms for all peoples. The Organization was created for all its Member States and all their peoples. It must be responsive to their interests and reflect their goals and aspirations.

From the perspective of the majority of small and medium-sized States, a singular shortcoming of the United Nations is the uneven treatment of issues, catering to the interests and sensitivities of big Powers and ignoring those of small countries. That inequality of treatment is especially evident in the field of peace and security. That is evident in the Middle East, where the views of the majority of the membership of the United Nations are not reflected either in the decisions of the Security Council or the pronouncements of the Secretariat. It is also evident from the omission from

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the annual report of any reference to the volatile region of South Asia and the central dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, which has plagued relations in that region for six decades. It is further evident in the one-sided approach of the United Nations to issues such as disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as human rights.

To ensure greater equity, it seems essential to rebalance the powers of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Security Council should restrict its role to the maintenance of international peace and security, and not encroach on the functions of other organs. Its proceedings and work should be open and transparent. Its composition should be more representative of the general membership, to whom the Security Council is ultimately accountable. As the Secretary-General noted in his report, the main recommendation of the reports of the facilitators last year was an intermediate approach as a compromise solution with a view to unblocking the process of reforming the Security Council. We endorse that view and approach as the most feasible. As recommended by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, we should seek to build on the progress that was achieved at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

At the same time, the General Assembly must assert its authority under the Charter, including in addressing peace and security in areas where the Security Council is unwilling or unable to act. Pakistan has suggested several concrete steps to empower the General Assembly. We hope to secure wide support for those suggestions during the current session, especially from small and medium-sized States.

It is also evident that we can considerably enhance the role of the United Nations in the area of conflict prevention and dispute resolution. There is ample scope under Chapter VI of the Charter for the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and the International Court of Justice to promote solutions to various conflicts and disputes among Member States through the mechanisms of conciliation, mediation, arbitration and good offices. The United Nations should pursue such a role as an obligation, not a favour to one or more of the parties to a dispute. In that context, we support the Secretary-General's desire to strengthen the United Nations Department of Political Affairs.

The prevention of conflict and its recurrence can also be achieved by strengthening the newly established Peacebuilding Commission. Although the Commission has made a good beginning with the consideration of Burundi and Sierra Leone, Pakistan is disappointed that its full potential remains constrained, in particular owing to defence of the Security Council's prerogatives by some of its permanent members and the somewhat facile approach of some who perceive the Peacebuilding Commission as merely another mechanism for donors and recipients.

In recent years, peacekeeping has emerged as a United Nations success story. As the United Nations largest troop contributor, Pakistan is particularly satisfied with that success. There is now a surge in demand for United Nations peacekeepers; but with 100,000 already deployed, the United Nations may soon face difficult capacity problems in responding to new demands for peacekeepers. The United Nations must also remain cautious in committing peacekeepers in situations where there may not be any peace to keep. Nor should the United Nations become an instrument for unwanted foreign intervention in the internal affairs of States.

Many conflicts and disputes, especially within States, arise from the politics of scarcity. Poverty and hunger aggravate and ignite political, ethnic and religious differences. Growing poverty is spreading war in developing countries, as much as are the illegal exploitation of natural resources and arms smuggling. There should be greater focus on the role of economic and social development as a cost-effective approach to preventing conflicts and tensions in and among the most vulnerable countries. The Economic and Social Council should be entrusted with that mandate.

The United Nations must restore the credibility of the quest for non-proliferation and disarmament. The consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation has eroded, due in particular to the refusal of the major Powers to disarm, the negligence regarding the security concerns of other States and the application of discriminatory standards to different States. South Asia in particular may, as a result, witness an escalation of an arms race unless a discriminatory approach is avoided. Pakistan has proposed the convening of an international conference to evolve a new and balanced

consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation. We encourage the Secretary-General to explore the possibility of convening such a conference.

Apart from peace and security, the United Nations has a principal role under the Charter to promote economic and social development. We are glad that the Secretary-General has accorded high priority to the development agenda. We believe that in our interdependent and globalized world, the developmental role of the United Nations is more essential than ever. This United Nations role has three dimensions, the first being policy formulation and the negotiation of norms, agreements and commitments, the second being development cooperation, including the United Nations system's operational activities for development, and the third being the monitoring and implementation of the agreed upon goals and commitments.

In the general debate in the Second Committee, Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, will outline a series of proposed actions to advance the development agenda.

The 2005 Summit declared human rights as the third pillar of the United Nations. This pillar can be strong only if the other two pillars, security and development, are equally strong. The replacement of the Commission on Human Rights with the Human Rights Council has not yet changed the culture of political confrontation that has plagued this field. There is hope that the consensus reached on the package of decisions relating to the agenda and procedures of the new Council may lead to a more objective and judicious approach to human rights and create the climate and working methods to ensure positive outcomes in work of the Council. It would be ironic indeed if those who proposed this Council were now to spurn and reject it. At the same time, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights must be reminded that it is part of the Secretariat of the United Nations and is not an independent entity. Its work programme, staffing and operations must be reviewed and approved by the Human Rights Council before submission to the General Assembly.

Finally, the Secretariat of the United Nations also requires review, renewal and reform. We have broadly supported the various United Nations reform proposals undertaken in recent years. We are willing to consider further reforms in procurement, accountability, administration of justice, enterprise resource planning, and human resources. However, it must be said that the Secretariat cannot be expected to discharge the additional responsibilities that are being assigned to it while Member States at the same time insist on zero growth in the budget of the United Nations. The resources provided to the United Nations should be commensurate with its mandate, not the other way around.

We believe that, to be really effective, the United Nations management and administrative reforms should be pursued with a strategic vision and in a comprehensive manner. The Four Nations Initiative, including the recommendations of their Report, offers an approach which could hold promise for such a comprehensive and strategic reform of the United Nations management and administration.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express Egypt's appreciation for the first report on the work of the Organization presented by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon since his assumption of office. I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General for the clarity of his assessments and the commendable ambition of the proposals he has put forward to address international challenges in a manner that further strengthens the credibility of the multilateral work conducted at the United Nations.

I would like to depart from my text by supporting what the representative of Pakistan had to say on the importance of strengthening the role of the United Nations in the peaceful settlement of chronic conflicts. We should not be content with addressing these issues outside the framework of the Organization, especially as regards the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We are all in agreement with the Secretary-General that reform is not in itself the ultimate goal but rather is the means to facilitate overcoming the obstacles that thwart the attainment of agreed goals. Egypt also values the focus put by the Secretary-General on the implementation of international obligations — particularly those pertaining to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — attaching due priority to the African continent, as the only continent for which the realization of most of the Goals remains a distant prospect. We therefore look forward to seeing the Secretary-General transform his visions in that regard into concrete proposals to be put before the General Assembly.

Having said that, we reiterate the central importance of receiving proposals from the Secretary-General in all areas of development, especially in that of social development, which did not receive an adequate share of attention in the Secretary-General's report. It is well known that health, education and employment are polar opposites of disease, epidemics, unemployment and immigration, and that success and failure in these areas depend on a whole range of internal and external factors requiring the United Nations to muster the necessary support of the international community for the creation of an international environment conducive to and supportive of efforts of developing countries to realize the MDGs, for which trade, debt cancellation and financing for development are key.

Egypt, as a middle-income country, believes that the United Nations should remain focused on the aforementioned causes, as middle-income countries are home to the biggest number of poor people globally, which means that they require economic and social support if they are to achieve their development goals at the national level and in their regional context.

This requires the implementation of pledges made by donors at the Monterrey, Gleneagles and Heiligendamm Summits, whether they are related to Africa or to fighting disease, especially HIV/AIDS and malaria. It also requires the implementation of the Secretary-General's request concerning the provision by donors to recipient countries during 2007 and 2008 and up to 2010 of timelines for aid increase until 2010, so that the countries can integrate such data when preparing national budgets and developmental projects. We wish to learn of the proposals of the Secretary-General in this regard, including the possibility of the establishment of an implementation follow-up mechanism.

As regards the issue of climate change, the High-level Event on this subject has reflected the ever-growing importance attached to it by the international community and to its negative impact on developing countries. Accordingly, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, an increased collective effort on the part of the international community is called for to limit phenomena related to climate change through the upholding and implementing of decisions taken at the Earth and Johannesburg Summits and based on the three pillars of sustainable development. This necessitates the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in implementing mandates decided upon by Member States, without seeking their reinterpretation and without adjusting the priorities of the Organization. Preserving international democratic decision-making, anchored in the purposes and principles of the United Nations, necessitates involving Member States in open, transparent and inclusive decision-making processes.

The delegation of Egypt commends the efforts of the United Nations to provide relief assistance to those affected by natural disasters. Egypt has contributed to the Central Emergency Response Fund since its establishment, and we also contribute to the Peacebuilding Fund. Both funds are examples of success in the international community's joint efforts to serve humanity. We believe that those examples should be maintained and built upon so that we can achieve similar successes in other areas.

If reform is to be effective, it is essential that the Secretariat maintain its impartiality, transparency and accountability and that it avoid addressing controversial issues as if they were objects of consensus. One example is the responsibility to protect. We decided at the 2005 World Summit that the General Assembly would continue to discuss the responsibility of Governments and States to protect their nationals, without introducing the concept of the international community's responsibility to protect peoples from their own Governments, which would represent intervention in States' internal affairs.

As we discuss this issue, our objective should remain enhancing the Organization's role in the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — whose sixtieth anniversary we are celebrating — and to ensure compliance with the Geneva Conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war. We consider the Geneva Conventions to be the fundamental pillars of the international community's responsibility to protect peoples — particularly to protect those living in countries under foreign occupation or countries where foreign forces are present in any context from the perils and merciless practices associated with such occupation or occupiers.

In the area of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, we support all efforts by the United Nations to build its capacity to serve as an international mediator in order

to help prevent political tensions from erupting into intra- or inter-State conflicts, thus reinforcing its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. While we have strongly supported the Secretary-General's proposals aimed at restructuring the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to maximize the effectiveness of the Organization's presence in conflict areas, we do not welcome the proposed initiatives on intervention to reform State security sectors and systems, because we believe that such matters are within the purview of State sovereignty and national constitutions.

With regard to respect for State sovereignty and international constitutional frameworks, we welcome the Organization's efforts to help Member States build their capacity to protect human rights in a cooperative, rather than confrontational, manner. Accordingly, we support the central role played by the Human Rights Council in strengthening respect for human rights at the international level. We invite the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on the situation of human rights defenders to refrain from criticizing the Council's decisions in the context of mutual respect for the balance of authority, as required by the Charter of the United Nations. We believe it is essential to ensure such a balance in the relationship among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as in the relationship between the Secretariat and those main organs.

At the same time, we welcome the Secretary-General's essential role in supporting the initiative of the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions, particularly his efforts to counter campaigns that seek to distort the religious and cultural beliefs of peoples as well as the ferocious campaigns targeting Islam and its adherents in many parts of the world, including those linking Islam with terrorism, and the false claims made against its prophets and messengers.

All Member States attach particular importance to reform of the Security Council and expansion of its membership. While the facilitators' reports concluded that interim arrangements might represent a consensus solution aimed at making progress on this issue, Member States have not yet agreed on that approach, and those reports merely listed the reform proposals presented by various parties. Member States are waiting for a State or group of States to submit a draft resolution reflecting that or any other approach. Egypt will consider any proposal that has the potential to fulfil the aspirations of the African continent. We continue to support the Ezulwini Consensus as an indivisible package that must retain all of its elements, particularly the power of the veto for new permanent members.

In the same context, I wish to welcome the Secretary-General's approach to overcoming the difficulties that are preventing the United Nations from playing a vital and fundamental role in the field of disarmament. The delegation of Egypt looks forward to concrete proposals from the Secretary-General aimed at invigorating the Organization's role in this area — particularly following his excellent proposal to transform the post of Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs into a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disarmament — that we can overcome the impasse in nuclear and conventional disarmament and address the issue of the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons and its negative effects on international peace and security.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me to congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly, on the effective and appropriate manner in which he is leading the debates and activities of the Assembly. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for drafting and submitting his report on the work of the Organization (A/62/1) and to commend him for the work he has accomplished during his mandate.

Seven years have passed since our heads of State or Government pledged to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although progress has been made towards those objectives, we are concerned at how far away a significant number of countries remain from such an achievement.

The African continent continues to face serious challenges in making sustained progress that will enable them to achieve the MDGs within the time frame established in 2000. We recognize the importance of the work of the Organization in that region. At the same time, we wish to emphasize the role of the United Nations and of the international community in general in addressing the priorities and needs of middle-income countries.

In the area of international cooperation, Member States must meet their official development assistance commitments and must guarantee broad and equitable access to international markets. My country calls for

the continued and active incorporation of modalities supporting South-South cooperation into the Organization's programmes and activities.

Terrorism continues to pose a great threat to international peace and security. Colombia rejects terrorism in all its forms and supports regional and international initiatives to combat that scourge. We are all committed to the fight against terrorism. My delegation wishes to highlight the progress made since the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and urges all Member States to fully implement that instrument and to strengthen international cooperation and coordination aimed at eliminating that threat.

The democratic security policy of the Government of President Uribe has enabled us to restore law and order and the institutions of the rule of law in all regions of the country. Since 2002, the homicide rate has fallen more than 40 per cent. Likewise, during the current Government the number of kidnappings in the country fell from 1,709 five years ago to 282 last year. Terrorist attacks against the infrastructure fell between 70 and 100 per cent during the same period.

As President Uribe stated during the general debate (see A/62/PV.8), Colombia has been able, in a transparent manner and with respect for freedoms and human rights, to reduce the number of terrorists financed by drug trafficking from 60,000 to 11,000 over the past five years. The Colombian Government offers every guarantee that those members of terrorist organizations who wish to abandon violence and resume their civic duties can do so within a framework that provides truth, justice and redress for the victims. Within that framework, 46,000 members of various organizations have been demobilized.

Thanks to the democratic security policy, confidence has also returned to the country and important social advances have been made. That will make it possible to achieve the MDGs in the social sector before 2015. In the past five years, the country's unemployment rate fell from 20 per cent to about 10 per cent. We hope soon to reach a single-digit unemployment rate. The number of children benefiting from our food programmes has grown from 3.7 million to 9 million. We hope to be able to reach 12 million children in the next three years. Our hope is to achieve full access to basic education and health care before 2010. We also hope to ensure that poverty, which in 2002 affected almost 60 per cent of our population, will not exceed 35 per cent by the end of the decade.

The United Nations must continue to strengthen its support to countries in eradicating poverty and achieving sustained economic growth and development. To that end, there must be greater coherence in the operational activities of the Organization. Coordination with Governments and national authorities is essential in that regard in order to promote efficient and effective efforts in the field by the United Nations.

We acknowledge the role that the United Nations can play in the area of humanitarian assistance. Issues having to do with humanitarian assistance must be addressed through a comprehensive approach in the context of the principles of impartiality, neutrality and humanity. Humanitarian assistance must contribute to the strengthening of local capacities, the rebuilding of the social fabric of affected populations and the development of structures that make it possible to move from emergency to development.

It was clear from the Assembly's general debate that Member States consider climate change to be an important issue. We agree with the Secretary-General that the Organization is in a privileged position to undertake measures that contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, that phenomenon. We must take advantage of the current political will to give impetus to agreements for the post-Kyoto period on the basis of a fair and equitable regime grounded in the principle of shared and differentiated responsibilities, as well as for a greater commitment by industrialized countries to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases.

Colombia, a country rich in biodiversity, has an important role to play in efforts to address global warming. Through its family stewards of the forest programme, the Government of Colombia will soon support nearly 80,000 families that are committed to the restoration and protection of the rain forest and the eradication of illicit crops. We expect broad support for the programme from the international community.

Moreover, we are making progress in the construction of mass transport systems in nine of our cities, as well as in the production of biofuels in accordance with environmental and food security policies. We have also succeeded in increasing the

number of gas-powered vehicles from 37,000 to almost 300,000.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate our support for the Secretary-General and his decisive efforts to confront the challenges facing the United Nations. Given his dedication and commitment to the objectives of the Organization, we are fully confident in supporting him on that path and making progress towards the goals that have been set.

Mr. Salgueiro (Portugal): I am speaking today on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey and Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process, the potential candidates Albania, Montenegro and Serbia and Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia have aligned themselves with this statement.

First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/1) on the work of the Organization. I shall avail myself of this opportunity to consider some of the report's main topics, as well as to share with the General Assembly the views of the European Union on the main challenges ahead. For the purpose of efficiency, and in order to save time, I will shorten my oral statement today. The full text of my remarks has already been distributed in the Hall.

Allow me to start by addressing the critical issue of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We find ourselves, in 2007, at the midpoint of the path to 2015 and the ultimate objective of meeting the MDGs, to date facing a mixed record in their implementation. As stated by the Secretary-General, the Goals have become the shared framework for development. We are pleased that this year's report includes the revised MDG monitoring framework, in line with the endorsement of the MDGs at the 2005 World Summit.

The European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to the MDGs and will continue to support developing countries in the implementation of their national development strategies through actions on aid volume and effectiveness, including debt relief, on trade and through international institutions. Actions to achieve the Goals at all levels should be undertaken in an integrated way that promotes efficiencies and reduces duplication and unnecessary competition, while taking into account that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

On that foundation of shared responsibility and partnership, the European Union has taken effective measures to meet its commitments as a donor. The Union has collectively surpassed the 2006 official development assistance (ODA) target of 0.39 per cent of gross national income (GNI) that was set in 2005, before the World Summit Outcome. Furthermore, the Union has set new ambitious targets for 2010 and 2015, including new levels for Africa. The Union is currently providing 57 per cent of global ODA, and is committed to reaching the target of 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2015. We will continue to make efforts to meet and exceed our timetables, and invite other countries to follow suit.

More aid, however, is not a panacea. Making sure that aid is more effective is as important as increasing its volume. We are pleased that the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness has become a widely recognized benchmark in that regard. In addition, concluding a balanced Doha Trade Round will ensure benefits for all countries. Developing countries themselves need to ensure high levels of governance, adopt ambitious development strategies and foster enabling environments for pro-poor economic growth where the private sector can flourish. We continue to support the strong and comprehensive commitments made in that regard by African countries, namely, through the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

HIV/AIDS remains a global scourge that must be combated at all levels through the scaling up of prevention, care, support and treatment, in particular as regards antiretroviral therapy. In that connection as well, the development and implementation of inclusive country-led strategies based on the Three Ones principle is key. Special attention must be paid to combating stigma and discrimination, protecting human rights, including those of vulnerable groups, and sexual and reproductive health and rights, in particular of women and young people, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

As the Secretary-General clearly outlines in his report, Africa remains in need of special attention as it lags behind other developing regions in achieving the MDGs. In this context, the European Union is working

together with its African partners to develop a comprehensive joint strategic partnership to be adopted at the EU-Africa Summit scheduled to take place in Lisbon in December.

Another priority for the European Union is combating climate change. The European Union commends the report of the Secretary-General for highlighting — for the first time — climate change as a separate priority theme, and one of the utmost importance. Indeed, climate change threatens to undermine the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. Thus, we deeply believe that the United Nations must be at the centre of global efforts to tackle climate change. The European Union strongly advocates constructive dialogue and encourages consideration of these issues in all appropriate forums, as long as these efforts remain linked to the United Nations process.

The high-level event on climate change convened by the Secretary-General on 24 September was a landmark and, above all, represents a resolute effort to forge a coalition to accelerate a global response to climate change and build international momentum for the negotiations starting this December in Bali with a view to ending with a global and comprehensive agreement on a post-Kyoto framework in Copenhagen in 2009.

The major effort to fight climate change in the immediate future must come from the major emitters. All developed countries need to commit to binding absolute emission reductions. But their actions alone will not be enough to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. It is indispensable that developing countries, and in particular the major emerging economies, start to reduce their emissions growth as soon as possible.

The European Union considers it is vital to prevent global warming of more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Although ambitious, this goal is both technically reasonable and economically affordable, if major emitters act urgently, leading by example. That is why the European Union is committed to cutting its emissions and becoming a highly energy-efficient, low-carbon economy.

Adaptation and mitigation strategies have to be fully integrated into strategies for poverty eradication in order to be able to reach the sustainable development goals as well as development planning and budgeting targets, throughout the United Nations system and in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way.

Allow me now to turn to peace and security. The European Union shares the Secretary-General's view on the importance of peaceful settlement of disputes and of promoting the necessary preventive actions in response to threats. It expresses appreciation for the Secretary-General's good offices in finding solutions for several ongoing conflicts.

The European Union encourages further progress on issues such as security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the role of natural resources in conflict; the rule of law; electoral practices; peacebuilding; democratic governance; the protection of civilians and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; and humanitarian assistance and development. It restates the unquestionable interconnection between development and security.

The European Union further underlines the importance of strengthening the cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, as well as among those international players. In this framework, the European Union welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative on building strategic partnerships in order to consolidate peace and security, and is particularly pleased with the signing on 12 June 2007 of the joint statement on United Nations-European Union cooperation in the field of crisis management.

The Peacebuilding Commission was created to address a gap in the United Nations system concerning the situation of countries emerging from conflict. During its first year of operation, the United Nations peacebuilding architecture contributed to developing a comprehensive international response to the needs of the countries under its consideration. The European Union actively supported the work of the Peacebuilding Commission during its first year and will continue to do so on the basis of its long-standing experience, resources and worldwide engagement.

The European Union supports the United Nations as the only truly global forum to counter terrorism and recognizes that the Organization has a key role in mobilizing the international community to combat this threat. The EU believes that the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly (resolution 60/288) was a significant

achievement. We must ensure its full implementation, including by reaching agreement on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism as soon as possible. For that reason, the European Union is actively cooperating with the Secretary-General's Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force and strongly supports its further consolidation.

On the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, the EU commends the Secretary-General for his commitment and reiterates its support for the proposed reforms in this realm, as well as for resolution 61/257, which provided for the creation of an Office for Disarmament Affairs headed by a High Representative at Under-Secretary-General level.

The European Union remains committed to upholding, implementing and also to further strengthening the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements. Thus, it has often expressed its disappointment at the lack of progress in that field.

Nevertheless, some important developments have taken place this past year, as rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report. These include the positive spirit which, in the end, prevailed during the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the constructive, structured and substantive discussions that took place during the first part of this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament; the launching of a process for an arms trade treaty and the consensus reached in June 2006 on the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering (A/62/163). The European Union appeals to all Member States to build on these positive, albeit modest, developments with a view to revitalizing the international disarmament agenda. In particular, while regretting that the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament was not overcome this year, the European Union urges the Conference to resume its negotiating role in early 2008.

The European Union shares the Organization's desire for a negotiated solution to the issues raised by the nuclear programmes of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. To that effect, the European Union underlines its continuing commitment to the comprehensive package proposed to Iran in June 2006 and annexed to Security Council resolution 1747 (2007). That package, among many elements, reaffirmed Iran's right to develop nuclear energy in conformity with its obligations under the NPT and included active support to build new light-water power reactors using state-of-the-art technology.

With the adoption of the institution-building package by the Human Rights Council last June (Human Rights Council resolution 5/1), we have taken yet another big step towards giving our Organization the ways and means to effectively address human rights in its work. The European Union hopes that all conditions are now in place for efficient and credible implementation of the Council's mandate, as foreseen in General Assembly resolution 60/251. In this regard, the European Union would like to see an improved and stronger system of special procedures coming out of the review of the individual mandates that was just started at the sixth session of the Human Rights Council.

Besides the new human rights treaties mentioned in the report, the European Union would also like to salute the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295).

The European Union welcomes the work done so far by the Security Council working group on children and armed conflict, as well as that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and that of UNICEF. Furthermore, the adoption of the Paris Principles and Commitments earlier this year and the 10-year review of the Graça Machel report (A/51/306) also contribute to highlighting this important issue.

The European Union remains committed to the principles and fundamental rights that are set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is looking forward to the commemorations of the Declaration's sixtieth anniversary in 2008. It is our belief that we should mark that anniversary by implementing and mainstreaming human rights in the work of the Organization, including at the field level, and counting on the valuable work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office.

The EU attaches great importance to promoting and strengthening the rule of law at national and international levels and supports the proposals submitted by the Secretary-General to that effect. The newly established Rule of Law Coordination and

Resource Group and its Secretariat unit need to be supported if they are to fulfil their functions of improving information flows, reducing duplication, identifying gaps and improving system-wide coordination. The European Union calls on the Secretary-General and Member States to provide all the assistance necessary to ensure that the Group and the unit can adequately fulfil their important functions.

The European Union also underlines its commitment to ending impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community and gives its entire support to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its activities. The EU attaches great importance to United Nations support for the ICC. We therefore call for the universal ratification of the Rome Statute and stress the importance of cooperation by States parties and States not parties with the Court, both in general and specifically with regard to the execution of arrest warrants.

The European Union is also committed to the advancement of the humanitarian reform agenda, including through the development of improved coordination capacity and more predictable funding. To this effect, we attach great importance to risk reduction, preparedness and response capacity at all levels, in order to face the challenges which derive from natural disasters. We also attach great importance to developments such as the Central Emergency Response Fund, the cluster approach and humanitarian partnerships.

At the same time, the European Union is particularly alarmed at the current humanitarian and security situations in the Sudan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Sri Lanka, and will support all efforts to prevent and denounce gender-based violence, to promote protection and assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons, and to ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian workers to the people in need. We must therefore continue our collective efforts to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response.

With specific regard to the situation in Darfur, the European Union welcomes progress in the implementation of the Joint Communiqué on Facilitation of Humanitarian Activities in Darfur, which was signed in March 2007.

On the issue of United Nations reform, we welcome the progress made in management reform with the establishment of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee and the strengthening of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The European Union also looks forward to the upcoming reforms on the administration of justice, information and communication technology, and procurement.

If we want real reform of the Organization, we must not forget its biggest asset — the staff — and a reform of human resources that can build a truly diverse, mobile, multifunctional and accountable staff.

The European Union is committed to ensuring the availability of adequate resources for the United Nations, while adhering to our long-standing principle of budgetary discipline. We will therefore seek to adopt a budget for 2008-2009 that will enable the United Nations to deliver meaningful results in all its activities within a reasonable envelope.

Furthermore, the European Union wishes to commend the work done in the sixty-first session of the General Assembly for the purpose of the revitalization of the Assembly, namely through the thematic debates on issues of particular relevance to the membership, and it welcomes the consultations that took place on this subject, which drew active participation from Member States and led to the adoption of resolution 61/292, which has the potential to have a significant impact on the way the General Assembly — and the United Nations as a whole — conducts its work.

The European Union also welcomes the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as set out in resolution 61/256, and looks forward to the full establishment of the Department of Field Support, including the appointment of an Under-Secretary-General.

The European Union welcomed the informal consultations on system-wide coherence organized during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. The European Union agrees with the Secretary-General that "delivering as one" (*A/62/1, para. 5*) must become a reality. Bearing in mind the EU's traditional commitment to advancing women's rights, and convinced that gender issues should be mainstreamed and that the United Nations architecture in this field should be streamlined as a matter of urgency, the European Union is adamant that a gender entity should be established at the Under-Secretary-General level. In addition, we would like to reiterate our willingness to work with the wider membership of the United

Nations, and all other relevant stakeholders, to strengthen international environmental governance and upgrade the United Nations Environment Programme into a United Nations Environment Organization.

All in all, the EU looks forward to pursuing this process in an inclusive and transparent manner during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly and counts on Member States to come together with a view to enhancing overall coherence and effectiveness within the United Nations.

The European Union agrees with the Secretary-General that the United Nations can do its job properly only with partners. The EU thus welcomes the progress made in developing partnerships with global constituencies. Strengthening the relationship with civil society and the private sector and improving links with national parliaments will help the United Nations to achieve its goals.

Finally, the European Union would like to praise the Secretary-General and all his staff for their dedicated work and to wish Mr. Ban Ki-moon all the best for his term in office. Allow me as well to congratulate former President of the General Assembly, Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her tireless efforts throughout the course of her mandate.

Mr. Hagen (United States of America): When the United States embraced the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) in this Hall in the year 2000, it was with great hope and determination for the future. We hoped to raise the standard of living for all people and to work together to eliminate major blights afflicting mankind, among them, poverty, disease, notably the spread of AIDS, the death of children and chronic malnutrition. My Government, like many others, made a commitment to align its national development assistance strategies with the goals and the ambitious timeline of the Millennium Declaration.

While there is clearly much more to do, we can be proud of the progress we have made, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/1). The number of people who live on less than a dollar a day is falling. Indeed, the proportion globally fell from nearly a third to less than a fifth between 1990 and 2004. The number of people with access to safe drinking water is rising by more than 10 million annually in Africa alone. More children have access to education, with the global primary enrolment rate having reached 88 per cent in 2005, and access is increasingly equal for both girls and boys. Child mortality rates are falling and child hunger is declining.

While much remains to be done to reverse the spread of AIDS and help AIDS orphans, great work has begun. For our part, the United States launched the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Today, 25 per cent of all assistance to combat AIDS worldwide comes from the United States.

As the Secretary-General observed in his report,

> "rapid and large-scale progress towards the Millennium Development Goals is possible when strong government leadership, good policies and practical strategies for increasing public investments are combined with adequate financial and technical support from the international community". (*A/62/1, para. 17*)

We are responding with assistance programmes that address many of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Through the Millennium Challenge Corporation, for example, we are reducing poverty through growth and have signed compacts with 14 countries worth $4.5 billion. Moreover, discussions continue with many more States.

Clearly, much progress has been made, even if a great deal more must be done between now and 2015. We remain optimistic. To quote former United States Secretary of State Powell, "perpetual optimism is a force multiplier". In that spirit, we have embraced British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's recent call to action.

Reviewing the Secretariat's work in the report before us, the United States would emphasize the need to stay focused on global goals, not every goal for every country. The report takes great pains to evaluate the shape and dimensions of our work. Yet it uses performance indicators for each and every country that Member States have not ratified. In so doing, the goals have begun to be expanded and redefined without consulting the Member States. While the report catalogues progress it also purports to highlight failure, but measured against indicators that are not our own.

Development assistance achieves the greatest good when it supports a plan owned by the receiving State and its citizens. Although we all strive for justice, opportunity and growth, States have different priorities, needs and systems. At its best, donor

assistance to recipient countries is catalytic and based on self-help.

In the Millennium Declaration, we asked the Secretary-General to issue periodic reports for consideration by the General Assembly and as a basis for further action. We did not ask that numerical targets be created and then expanded, or that new indicators be selected to judge us. There is no doubt that, despite best efforts to meet our commitments, we have yet to fulfil our aspirations. But creating new definitions or expanding the scope of previously agreed Millennium Development Goals will not help us maintain consensus. Let us stay focused on what we set out to accomplish and renew our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals affirmed here on 8 September 2000.

In context, the Millennium Development Goals and associated development strategies become real and sustainable only when associated with continuing economic growth and increased country ownership and capacity. Let us achieve those goals, and make them our hallmark in this young millennium.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): The annual report (A/62/1) of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the work of the Organization is an excellent overview of the achievements made during the past year, as well as of the complex challenges facing us. The report helps us to keep focus on the main issues — on the need for good governance and accountability, both within the Organization as well as in Member States.

We thank the President of the General Assembly for his initiative to make climate change a central theme for the general debate during this session of the Assembly. We also thank the Secretary-General for organizing the high-level event of 24 September, which played an important role in consolidating the global consensus on the need to act. The Kyoto Protocol provides a basis for the continuation of effective action in reducing emissions. Participants in the meeting to be held at Bali in December should decide to start a process leading to a comprehensive post-2012 climate agreement.

Global warming is already devastating the lives of millions. How we address that issue will be a test of our commitment to the values of the United Nations. The poorest in developing countries — those who are least responsible for causing climate change — tend to be the hardest hit. We have to focus on their needs in our common effort to fight this global threat. Adaptation to climate change should therefore be dealt with as an integral part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Foreign Minister of Iceland emphasized development issues in her statement at the general debate on 28 September (see A/62/PV.11). She reiterated Iceland's strong commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and highlighted the importance of women's empowerment.

Official development assistance (ODA) plays a vital role in achieving the MDGs. Our ODA has doubled over the past four years, and we aim to be among the top contributors soon.

Increased aid effectiveness is also central to development results. We support follow-up to the report (A/61/583) of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence, which will make the United Nations more effective in delivering results on the ground.

We also support the Panel's recommendations concerning gender. Gender mainstreaming has to be addressed in a more systematic manner. We support the establishment of a new gender entity and a new post of Under-Secretary-General to strengthen the performance of the United Nations in this area of work. The excellent work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women must be built upon within the new structures.

On the issue of HIV/AIDS, Iceland fully shares the views the Secretary-General sets out in his report. We believe that the fight against AIDS should remain a priority and that the United Nations should become a model workplace with regard to the issue. The need for a sustainable response over the long term has indeed become clearer than ever.

The United Nations is the premier international organization responsible for maintaining peace and security. That is a complex, multidimensional task. We strongly support intensifying the work of the United Nations in the area of conflict prevention. That is indeed in line with the holistic approach we have increasingly applied to our work. As has so often been said in the Hall, there can be no security without development and no development without security.

With over 100,000 persons in the field, United Nations peacekeeping activities have expanded rapidly.

The new peacebuilding architecture is beginning to prove its value for peacebuilding operations. Iceland will continue to contribute to the Peacebuilding Fund.

Millions experience assaults on their personal security, including through terrorism. We welcome the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), which will be an important plan of action in our fight against terrorism. It is now up to us, the Member States, to implement it. That successful partnership should be a motivation for us to finalize a comprehensive convention on international terrorism during this session of the General Assembly.

As a small island State without a military of its own, Iceland is concerned by the current situation in the field of disarmament, where, despite continued efforts by the majority of Member States over a number of years, very little progress has been achieved, some of it outside the United Nations framework. Our failures in that area pose a threat to peace and security. Now is the time to renew our efforts. The international community must react collectively and firmly, within the United Nations framework, to maintain international peace and security. The conclusion of an arms trade treaty would certainly be a significant achievement.

The protection and promotion of fundamental human rights is one of the primary aims of the United Nations. The Secretary-General notes in his report the significant progress that the international community has made in advancing human rights standards and mechanisms. Iceland welcomes that development. The establishment of the Human Rights Council was an important event. Work should continue on its consolidation.

Most of our work within this institution is interlinked, and it is evident that poverty, inequality and a lack of economic and social rights make the exercise of political and civil rights difficult. We are now approximately halfway to our deadline for the Millennium Development Goals, and we will soon need to deliver on our promises. It is incumbent upon those who have the good fortune to be prosperous to join in solidarity with others to make those rights available to all. The security challenges that we face this century are such that they can only be addressed in solidarity with others, within this Organization.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In his report (A/62/1), the Secretary-General rightly advances the idea that today no one can deal with the multitude of global problems alone. Those problems can be effectively resolved only through collective efforts, primarily through the most representative international and inter-State mechanism with real universal competence: the United Nations. The Organization is more essential than ever, because of the expanded place occupied by conflict in world affairs. This is related to worsening regional crises, terrorist threats and the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, stagnation in the disarmament area and the persistence of poverty and backwardness.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, the Russian Federation intends to continue contributing actively to the implementation of a conflict-resolution strategy that gives priority to political and diplomatic methods. We support the view of the Secretary-General on the need to revitalize the disarmament agenda on the basis of coordinated collective efforts in which the United Nations must play a more effective role. We also support his view on the need to resolve problems in that area through exclusively peaceful means on the basis of the linkage of the processes of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Among United Nations priorities, he has singled out the effort to prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the hands of non-State entities. We support the priority task identified by the Secretary-General of increasing the Organization's capacity to prevent conflict through multilateral diplomacy. The attainment of those goals will be helped by strengthening the United Nations system as a whole by adapting it to global realities on the basis of the broadest possible agreement among Member States and based on the universal inter-State nature of the United Nations.

The Russian delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's intention to defend the principle of the rule of law in international affairs. We note his appeal for progress in the achievement of historic agreements under the newly developed concept of the responsibility to protect. That concept exists only in skeleton form and does not yet have a universal political or legal basis. The 2005 World Summit mandated the General Assembly to continue to consider the question, taking into account the principles of the Charter of United Nations and international law. In developing a detailed and substantial concept, we should base our efforts on the

fact that there is no alternative to ensuring a well thought out and non-confrontational approach that takes into account the interests of the entire international community and is based on the fundamental principles and norms of international law.

Efforts to guarantee safe living conditions for people everywhere in the world must be supplemented by an effective safety mechanism against illegal interference in the internal affairs of States. The implementation of the concept of the responsibility to protect on behalf of — and in the interests of — the international community should be carried out on the basis of decisions taken in accordance with the Charter of United Nations. Only then will it be an effective instrument for ensuring the rule of law in crisis situations, when vitally important rights, values and interests protected by international law are threatened.

The report of the Secretary-General rightly highlights the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) and efforts to create adequate and appropriate mechanisms for its implementation and for an integrated effort to counter and eradicate the threat of terrorism. We support the further practical development of the report's priorities for the Secretariat's Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. We note that the report's review of United Nations counter-terrorism activities does not include the Security Council; this, of course, is an omission.

We agree that there is a need for broader involvement by the business and private sector and by civil society in the implementation of the Strategy. We note in particular the growing support for the Russian Federation's initiative within the Group of Eight to strengthen counter-terrorism partnerships between States and business.

Increasing the Organization's capacity in the areas of human rights protection, the rule of law and democracy should be primarily focused on more effective cooperation and on providing assistance to States. That kind of constructive approach, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, will make it possible to strengthen effective interaction with interested countries.

The report gives a prominent place to the Human Rights Council, in which our hopes are placed for restoring trust in intergovernmental processes for the protection of rights. However, it is silent on the role of the General Assembly, of which the Council is a subsidiary body, and of its Third Committee.

We agree that there is a need to improve the regional representation of civil society organizations in United Nations forums. Above all, we should involve more actively non-governmental structures from the countries of the South. On the whole, we note with satisfaction the report's proper analysis of the economic activities of the United Nations, which are in line with the goals set by the relevant intergovernmental decisions. However, we note that the recommendations of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence have not yet been the subject of intergovernmental discussion and therefore cannot be considered as direct guidance for action by the Organization.

In the humanitarian area, I should like to call for a cautious approach to the sensitive question of the safety of humanitarian personnel and their access to people in need, so as not to politicize the work of the United Nations in this area.

We also note that effectively countering climate change involves agreed-upon and scientifically justified decisions which are realistic and fair, do not infringe on the rights of countries to development and are genuinely universal in nature.

We attach great importance to the implementation of General Assembly decisions on Secretariat reform, including those on improving the effectiveness and transparency of the functioning of the Organization in the administrative, financial and personnel areas. We share the view of the Secretary-General about the need for reform in those areas.

It is important to access the real output of Secretariat activities and to ensure a higher level of professionalism, efficiency and competence of personnel, with clear accountability and responsibility on the part of managers at all levels towards Member States. In this respect, reform should not lead to unjustified increases in budget resources, to an inflationary staffing table or to an unjustified increase in the compensation package for United Nations staff. We expect that the Secretary-General's reform proposals to be in strict accordance with established procedures and to be submitted in timely fashion to the General Assembly for consideration.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.